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NOTE: The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 6. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this joint statement. An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

**The President's News Conference
With President Martin Torrijos
Espino of Panama in Panama City,
Panama**

November 7, 2005

President Torrijos Espino. A very good morning, esteemed journalists. I'm pleased to welcome you, to welcome the President of the United States to Panama.

On this rainy morning, we've had a work meeting with President Bush, and we've had the opportunity to exchange viewpoints on various subjects of interest to Panama as well as of interest to the United States. We've discussed the advantages and opportunities offered by free trade, and we've reviewed our agenda, starting with past April's visit when I had the opportunity to visit President Bush in Washington.

Panama has had a special relationship with the United States throughout the various stages of its history, and the President and I are committed to maintain and strengthen this through dialog and through an open relationship such as we have had so far. There will not always be agreement, such as in the unexploded ordinance issue, but there will always be a frankness, sincerity between us so that we can discuss as friends on the various viewpoints of our countries.

In a few moments, I'll have the opportunity to take President Bush to the Miraflores Locks. This will be the first time that a sitting U.S. President—the first time a sitting U.S. President left the United States, he did so to observe the construction of the Panama Canal. And today the President of the United States, George W. Bush, will have the opportunity to see how we Panamanians feel proud not only of the process of reversion of the Panama Canal from U.S. to Panamanian hands, but we also feel proud of the

way the canal is being managed and of the opportunities that it will offer into the future.

Welcome, Mr. President. And we will now offer an opportunity for press from both sides to ask a couple of questions.

President Bush. I look forward to going to the Panama Canal. I am most impressed by the management of the canal. Those who are responsible for the Panama Canal have done an excellent job, and this is beneficial to the world, and I congratulate you for that. And I'm really looking forward to seeing it.

I'm also looking forward to paying our respects to—by laying a wreath. I'm also looking forward to seeing some of the Panamanian baseball stars. People around here know how to play baseball, and I'm looking forward to seeing some of your stars, Mr. President. So thanks for letting us come. Thanks for inviting me.

We have had a very good discussion, and it's important we have discussions, because we're friends. And one of the matters we discussed was, how do we work together to improve the lives of our respective citizens? And one way is through trade. We're in the midst of negotiating a free trade agreement with Panama. And I told the President this free trade agreement is important for America, as he told me it's important for Panama. And we're close to coming to an agreement, and we'll continue to work on that agreement for the good of our respective peoples.

I also told him that I was pleased with the leadership of Panama and Argentina. Twenty-nine nations said, loud and clear, "It's important for us to continue to advance a trade agenda that is positive for the people of this hemisphere." And I appreciated your Government's stance on that, Mr. President. You're acting in the interest of your people.

And speaking about the interest of the people, I do want to say something about the tornados that recently hit America. I had the—I called the Governor of Indiana this morning and expressed my deepest condolences for the families who lost lives. I asked him if there was more Federal response needed. He felt like the response that we had given was appropriate at the time. And many Americans are now asking God's blessings on those who suffered through this natural disaster.

Mr. President, I'm fully aware that 25,000 of our citizens live in your beautiful country. I can see why. It is a beautiful country. Panama City is a modern, progressive city, and your Government is a modern, progressive Government. I congratulate you for your fiscal reforms. I congratulate you for the strong growth of your economy. I appreciate your transparency. I appreciate your strong commitment to fighting corruption. It sends a clear signal not only to the people of this important country but also to people throughout the region. And it's noble, and it's important that you continue, which I know you will, your very strong leadership.

I look forward to continuing to discuss ways for us to fight narcotrafficking. You've been strong in that. And that's important for our hemisphere, not to allow the narcotraffickers and narcoterrorists to be able to threaten the stability of democracies. I also appreciate your strong commitment to democracy, itself, rule of law, and freedom to worship, freedom of the press, the ability for government to be transparent, and governments to have checks and balances so that we deal with the rule of law, not the rule of man. And it's your example, which is an important example for others to see.

And again, I want to thank you very much for your leadership. I also thank you very much for helping another part of the world become free and democratic, and that's in Iraq. And I appreciate the supervisors that you sent to help monitor the elections, to see to it that those—the vote on the constitution is free and fair. And I congratulate you for that. It's an important gesture, recognizing that—a gesture that recognizes that freedom is universal in its application and that democracy is the best way to lay the groundwork for peace.

And I finally want to thank you very much for the condolences and offers of assistance you gave to our people after Hurricane Katrina. You're indeed a good friend, and I'm proud to be here to confirm that friendship.

President Torrijos Espino. Thank you.

We would at this time open the floor to two questions per side for the journalist group.

Panama-U.S. Free Trade Agreement/ Unexploded Ordinance

Q. Good morning. You discussed the free trade agreement. There's been some remarks, Mr. President, in regard that your support in Congress has lessened and that the CAFTA was approved by a very narrow margin. What are the real probabilities of getting support in Congress for the ratification of a free trade agreement between Panama and the United States?

And there's also concern in Panama regarding the subject of the unexploded ordinance in areas contaminated in Emperador, San Jose, et cetera, and the commitment from the United States as to whether those areas can be decontaminated.

President Bush. Let me start with the chances of getting an agreement passed. The first step is to get the agreement done, and we're getting close. And I—we talked to Trade Minister Portman yesterday on the way here to Panama. He understands how—the importance I place and the priority I place on this agreement. And we just got to continue to work it and get it done.

Secondly, we're going to have to work the Congress. We talked about working the Congress. It's—I'll do my best to work in the Congress, and the Panamanian Government understands that once we get an agreement, that ministers and friends and allies of Panama will go work the Congress. And one area that we need to make progress on is with the Democrat Party. The Democrat Party is a free—for many sessions, was a free trade party. Not totally, but they had—let me rephrase that—the Democrat Party had free trade members who are willing to make the right decisions based not on politics but based on what's best for the interest of the country. And that spirit has dissipated in recent votes, and Panama can help reinvigorate the spirit. We can help to make sure this isn't just such a partisan issue, that people are unwilling to make a vote based upon their principle and what's right for our respective countries.

Secondly, we had obligations under the treaty, and we felt like we met those obligations. There is a difference of opinion, and so we have a disagreement that we will continue to discuss. And we're able to do so in

a way that I think is constructive, because we're friends.

Deb [Deb Riechmann, Associated Press].

CIA Employee's Identity Disclosure Investigation

Q. Back in October of 2000, Mr. President—

President Bush. October of 2000?

Q. Yes, sir. Back in October of 2000, this is what you said—

President Bush. Okay. Whew.

Q. “We will ask not only what is legal but what is right, not what the lawyers allow but what the public deserves.” In the CIA leak case, has your administration lived up to this campaign promise?

President Bush. In the—pardon my—I didn't hear you.

Q. In the CIA leak case, has your administration lived up to this campaign promise?

President Bush. Oh, Deb, look, I said the other day to the press corps that was assembled in Argentina that there's still an ongoing investigation. We take this investigation very seriously, and we'll continue to cooperate during the investigation.

Panama Canal/Free Trade of the Americas Agreement

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. President Bush, how would the United States look upon mainland China's participation in the subject of the widening of the Panama Canal? And would this participation affect interests of the United States?

And on the other hand, in the recent FTAA summit held in South America, there were deep divisions, and what do you feel these deep divisions are all about, these ideological issues among the countries of MERCOSUR?

President Bush. First let me start with the Panama Canal. I think it is wise for the Government to consider modernizing the canal. It's—things have changed since the canal was first built, and there needs to be a continued appraisal of the canal to make sure that it is—it's used. It's in the Nation's interest that this canal be modernized. And so I—we didn't discuss the financing mechanisms, but I'm confident that however the widening is—the modernization is financed,

that the Government and the—those authorities over the canal recognize that it is to be used by everybody, that the canal is international, that there ought to be equal access. It's in the interest of those who run the canal not only to modernize it but to make sure it's used properly.

At the FTAA, 29 countries—I mean, at the summit on the FTAA, 29 countries said, “Let's make sure in 2006, we continue discussing a way forward for the FTAA,” 29 of the 34 countries. There was a strong approval for the concept of working together to put agreements in place that will enable us to compete with China in the long run, for example. And so I found the spirit for free trade to be strong. There was five nations that said, “Well, we don't want to do it as soon as 2006.” On the other hand, I went to Brazil yesterday, and there was strong agreement in Brazil that we work together to advance the Doha round of the WTO.

The impression I came away with, which is an accurate impression is, is that there's a lot of people who recognize—by far, the vast majority of countries recognize it's in our nations' interests to advance the trade agenda.

Let's see here. Toby [Tabassum Zakaria, Reuters].

War on Terror

Q. Mr. President, there has been a bit of an international outcry over reports of secret U.S. prisons in Europe for terrorism suspects. Will you let the Red Cross have access to them? And do you agree with Vice President Cheney that the CIA should be exempt from legislation to ban torture?

President Bush. Our country is at war, and our Government has the obligation to protect the American people. The executive branch has the obligation to protect the American people; the legislative branch has the obligation to protect the American people. And we are aggressively doing that. We are finding terrorists and bringing them to justice. We are gathering information about where the terrorists may be hiding. We are trying to disrupt their plots and plans. Anything we do to that effort, to that end, in this effort, any activity we conduct, is within the law. We do not torture.

And therefore, we're working with Congress to make sure that as we go forward, we make it possible—more possible to do our job. There's an enemy that lurks and plots and plans and wants to hurt America again. And so, you bet, we'll aggressively pursue them. But we will do so under the law. And that's why you're seeing members of my administration go and brief the Congress. We want to work together in this matter. We—all of us have an obligation, and it's a solemn obligation and a solemn responsibility. And, you know, I'm confident that when people see the facts, that they'll recognize that we've—they've got more work to do and that we must protect ourselves in a way that is lawful.

Mr. President, thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 9:25 a.m. at the Casa Amarilla. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Mitch Daniels of Indiana. President Torrijos Espino and some reporters spoke in Spanish, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this news conference.

Remarks in a Discussion on Panama's Future in Panama City

November 7, 2005

I want to thank you very much. Mr. President, thank you for your invitation. I told the President earlier I was really looking forward to stopping here in Panama for a variety of reasons. First, I'm proud of the job he's done. He's fought corruption. He's been a strong fiscal steward of the people's money. This economy is growing.

Secondly, I wanted to see the Panama Canal. It's a marvel. It's a fantastic opportunity to see this great engineering feat. And at our press availability today, I said how proud I was of the people of Panama for managing this canal in such a professional way, for the good of commerce around the world.

Thirdly, I think it's very important for us always to reconfirm the importance of democracy in our hemisphere. And Panama is a strong democracy, a democracy that believes in the freedom to worship, the free-

dom to speak, the freedom of the press, the notion that everybody has got a voice. And so it's an opportunity to say thank you for those of you who are working so strong to make sure your democracy flourishes.

So Laura and I are really thrilled to be here. It's a magnificent trip. I'm sorry it's not longer. I told the President after I'm President, I'll come back and go fishing with him. [Laughter] In the meantime, thanks for having us. I'm proud to be here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:30 a.m. at Salon Miraflores. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Rally for Gubernatorial Candidate Jerry Kilgore in Richmond, Virginia

November 7, 2005

The President. Thank you all very much. Thanks for the kind introduction, Governor. We're not taking anything for granted. Laura and I are here to ask you to turn out the vote tomorrow for Jerry Kilgore as the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

I want to thank you all for coming out tonight. I remember what it's like to be right there on election eve. This man has worked his heart out. He has traveled the great Commonwealth of Virginia talking common sense to the voters, and now it's your time. He's counting on you to get out and turn out the vote and deliver a great victory on behalf of all people of Virginia by putting him in the Governor's chair.

I appreciate you coming out here to the airport. See, we were just flying in from Latin America. Decided to stop a little short of our destination. See, I know a man of character and integrity, and he's standing right next to me. And that's Jerry Kilgore.

When you find a man who's got this kind of character, it makes sense to stop short of the destination to come in and to say to the people of this State, "Put him in office, and you'll be proud of the job he'll do for you."

He's got a record. See, you can count on him. You know where he stands, and you know he can get the job done. And equally